

*The LORD is my strength and my shield; my heart trusted in him, and I am helped: therefore my heart greatly rejoiceth; and with my song will I praise him. The LORD is their strength, and he is the saving strength of his anointed. (Psalm 28:7-8)*

There are two fairly reliable barometers of spirituality that a visitor can readily observe upon his first call to a church. One is the proximity to the front where the members seat themselves. If they are near the pulpit, it indicates a primary interest in the Word of God and worship. If, however, they are scattered over the rear, leaving a vast emptiness up front, it indicates they have an aversion to truth, to worship, and are more interested in observing those who sit in front.

The other barometer is the songs they sing. If the songs are sung with reluctance, timidly, draggingly, it is certain their hearts are not in them, whatever kind they are. If, on the other hand, the songs are sung lustily and heartily but have little or no theological content in them, then it is a people who know little or nothing of God, but simply revel in the emotional rhythm of the music. If the songs are man-centered, dripping with maudlin sentimentality, we have a carnal people bereft of spirituality. But if the songs abound with glory and admiration to God, speak of His great salvation, expressing praise and adoration to the Savior, and they are sung heartily and with great expression, you can be sure that you have found a place where people know what true salvation is. You have found the assembly of the Redeemed.

Two things are equally wicked when it comes to strength for our lives. The first is for man to depend upon himself, to foolishly imagine that he in himself is able to overcome temptation and sin, and to live a life pleasing to God. The other is for man to recognize that he is impotent to resist temptation, to abstain from sin and to please God within himself, yet is content to remain in that state. A further aggravation to this wickedness is when men glory in such defeat and soundly condemn any teachings that assert that men may rise above it through Jesus Christ.

It is in view of such saving strength of the LORD that we sing praises to Him. He not only has forgiven the sins of those who trust in Him, but He has enabled them to triumph over temptation and trial by His strength. Who could but sing praises to such a Savior?

-C.M.